

Crew Resource Management

Situational Awareness

Assertiveness

Decision Making

Communication

Leadership

Adaptability/Flexibility

Mission Analysis

I'm Pretty Sure He Saw Them

By Lt. Jim Adams

We have been learning the seven skills of crew-resource management for years. It is a basic, some say common-sense, philosophy we use to make sure a mission is accomplished safely and effectively. Failure to use CRM can result in mission failure, loss of life, or just making yourself and your crew look unprofessional. Fortunately, my crew suffered only the latter.

After spending three days on detachment, my crew was pre-flighting for our return to home plate. The junior of our two flight engineers (FEs) conducted an exterior inspection of our P-3C. As patrol-plane commander (PPC), I also did an exterior inspection. During my inspection, I saw the landing-gear pins still were installed—not unusual, since many FEs leave the pins installed until just before the planeside brief.

We were late starting engines because cargo we were taking back to home plate was delayed. We also were held up because of a fuel spill from an adjacent aircraft. In an effort to expedite our departure, I held the planeside brief while we waited for the cargo. At the brief, I normally make sure the gear pins are inside the aircraft and not in the landing gear. Since we still had time to wait, I did not direct the FE to remove the pins, figuring we would take care of it when we were ready to go.

After a delay of an hour and a half, the cargo arrived, and the emergency vehicles for the fuel spill departed. We made sure everyone was aboard, and we strapped in. The copilot read the before-start checklist, beginning with the first item, “gear pins.”



CRM Contacts:

Lt. Dave Messman, OPNAV
CRM Resource Officer
(703) 604-7729, (DSN 664)
david.messman@navy.mil

ATC(AW) Douglas Thomas, NAVAIR
(301) 757-8127 (DSN 757)
CRM Program Manager
douglas.thomas@navy.mil

CRM Instructional Model Manager.
NASC Pensacola, Fla.
(850) 452-2088/5567 (DSN 922)
<http://www.wnt.cnet.navy.mil/crm/>

LCdr. Mike Reddix, Naval Safety Center
(757) 444-3520, Ext. 7231 (DSN 564)
michael.reddix@navy.mil



Have you ever forgotten to remove the gear pins?

This checklist item requires a response from the FE and the copilot of “removed,” indicating each person has verified the gear pins are inside the plane, not in the landing gear. The senior FE and the copilot each responded with “removed.”

As it turns out, neither visually had checked the gear pins. Each one thought the other had seen them, when, the truth is, neither had. I also neglected to visually check the pins, assuming the FE and the CP had done so—they responded to the checklist.

We took off and realized the landing gear would not come up—the pins still were installed. We landed right away, pulled the pins, and took off again, minus a big chunk of pride.

CRM, used correctly, is supposed to keep us from making such mistakes. Here’s what should have happened:

Assertiveness. Both the copilot and the FE had their doubts about where the pins were, but no one spoke up. Neither did I mention I had not seen them.

Communication. We had a big lack of communication, not only with the copilot and FE but also with the

PPC and junior FE. Any one of us could have broken the chain by voicing the concern we each had been whispering in our heads.

Leadership. This one hits me straight to the bone. As PPC and mission commander, it is my job to make sure the crew, myself included, properly performs their duties. Overall responsibility for the aircraft and the mission lies solely with me. I failed miserably as the leader.

Situational Awareness. I think it’s obvious: We lost ours.

There are other situations where a lack of CRM could have had more severe consequences. The combined P-3 flight time among our flight-station crew was nearly 9,000 hours; yet, we failed to execute a basic aircrew function.

On every mission:

- Keep up your guard.
- Use CRM.
- Remember the basics; they never change, no matter how long you fly. 🦅

Lt. Adams flies with VP-8.